

Hamilton School

Striving to be a great school where people work together to transform lives

Talking To People

Young people use the internet to talk to others in a number of different ways: emailing, instant messaging, webcam and chat rooms. The online world provides young people with the opportunity to be inquisitive, explore relationships and actively seek risks, such as flirting with people that they don't know.

Chatting online feels different to chatting face-to-face. It can be easier to say and reveal things that you wouldn't in the real world, and be mean, aggressive or flirtatious.

It is important for young people to remember that there are offline consequences to online behaviours.

As a parent or carer, you need to understand the ways young people communicate with others, and the potential risks.

Until you feel your child is responsible and mature enough to understand and manage the risks of communicating with people they do not know, then you should restrict the sites they use and people they talk to. Young people should be aware that they can:

Block contacts. Most chat sites enable you to block contacts to prevent them from communicating with you.

Report contacts. If someone is being inappropriate on chat sites, you can often report this directly to the site administrator.

However, if your child has experienced sexual or offensive chat that has made them feel uncomfortable or someone is trying to meet up with them, you can report this directly to CEOP

What is Instant Messaging?

Instant messaging (IM) is instant text chat between two or more people. This tends to be private un-moderated chat. You can build a list of 'friends' or 'buddies' that you can chat to, they can see when you are online and start conversations with you. It is important for young people to know how to manage this list, for example, blocking contacts they don't want to talk to.

Windows Live Messenger is a popular IM service; however, many sites, including Facebook, provide instant messaging.

What Is SPIM?

SPIM is unsolicited messages that are sent through instant messaging sites. These could be adverts, scams, viruses or ways to gather your personal information for the purpose of fraud. Often these appear to be real people requesting to chat.

Your child should not click on messages and links from people that they do not know on their instant messaging accounts as they may risk their computer's security.

What is Webcam Chat?

Webcams let you see the person you're talking to while you're chatting. Services like Skype are very popular and free. This can be a great way for young people to chat to each other; however, it is important to remember that what appears on webcam can be recorded and shared with other people in ways that you wouldn't want. Young people should be aware that it is never a good idea to reveal too much of themselves on webcam; this includes engaging in sexual behaviour.

What are Chatrooms?

A chat room is a forum where groups of people meet to chat online – this can sometimes be about a particular topic, or can be friends meeting to discuss something. Sometimes chat rooms are moderated; this means that someone, or a computer program, is looking out for inappropriate language or behaviour. Some chat rooms, even those aimed at young people, do contain a lot of sexual chat and online flirting. It is important for young people not to engage in sexual chat with people they do not know, or reveal too much about themselves

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